



## Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 156

### UNIT TRAVEL SYSTEM (UTS)

**The introduction of the Coast Guard's new travel claim settlement system is another step in our ongoing efforts to improve this process. Timely and accurate travel claim settlement is the goal!**

Background: Every travel claim (TDY or PCS) for every member of Team Coast Guard (active, civilian, reserve, auxiliary, guests) is worked by the Human Resources Service and Information Center's (HRSIC) travel staff. This dedicated staff of approximately 50 yeomen and civilians, works full-time to process claims and assist Coast Guard travelers. Each year HRSIC processes approximately 150,000 claims worth \$88 million. Over 99% of those claims are paid within 30 days of receipt. Until recently, each of those claims arrived at HRSIC by U.S. Mail or fax, and required someone to manually enter the data from the claim form into the computation software. **The CG's new *Unit Travel System* (UTS) is our first automated claim submission software in the spirit of e-Coast Guard.** UTS will mean quicker and more accurate reimbursement for travelers, and increased efficiency at HRSIC. Many other agencies are moving toward automated travel claim submission software also, but for now, UTS is the Coast Guard's best option.

Progress: **UTS has been in test mode during FY01 and over 2000 claims from 100 units have been submitted and settled using this new process.** The software looks different from the claim forms we use now, but the data and display are similar and logical. UTS is managed by HRSIC and hosted at FINCEN on a web-style server making it accessible from anywhere in the CG via our Intranet. There is a built-in help feature, manuals and "common-error" help-page links. UTS will continue to be improved as we move forward.

Business Changes: **Past travel business practices will need to be updated to maximize benefits of UTS.** On-line approval and workflow routing are built into UTS. Travelers may now prepare orders and advances in UTS and submit them for approval to their Authorizing Official. After traveling, you sign-on to prepare your travel claim. The data from your orders can be pre-loaded into the claim; only changes in your itinerary will need to be updated. As provided in our current process, your Administrative Reviewer will verify travel, review receipts and approve your claim. He or she will then forward the claim to HRSIC electronically. The traveler will keep orders, receipts, and a printed travel claim in their possession for possible future audit. No receipts or paperwork will be mailed to HRSIC when using UTS. Internal controls in UTS help avoid incorrect or illegal submissions, but the personal attention of the Administrative Reviewer remains crucial to authorized and accurate claims.

Plan: **HRSIC is ready to expand the use of UTS and start the culture change toward automated travel claim submission.** All CG units and personnel currently have the capability to use the system. Go to <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/hrsic/TVL.htm> and click on "Use UTS". You may begin by entering your SSN (soon this will be your new CGHRMS employee ID number) for initial sign-on and update your profile. Authorizing officials and reviewers need to be registered at HRSIC. The plan is to increase UTS use throughout the remainder of CY01 by encouraging use in various regions and unit types through a targeted schedule. Units currently using the approved fax-claim program will be transitioned first since the procedure is the most similar to UTS. UTS claims will

result in faster settlement, however paper claims will continue to be accepted and worked through at least FY02. UTS was designed for both TDY and PCS claims, but we're concentrating on TDY claims first. For this year all units should continue to send PCS claims via paper with receipts to HRSIC.

**E-Infrastructure: I know there are some significant issues with respect to the necessary e-infrastructure support throughout the Service.** Units with limited on-line connectivity and access have a more limited ability to use the new technology. We will maintain the current paper-based travel claim system as necessary to support those units who have barriers to adequate connectivity/access. As the Coast Guard resolves these challenges, we will be able to continue reducing the labor intensive paper submission process and expediting the processing for all.

**Support:** In the world of e-Coast Guard, some members are best self-served with web pages and access. For these folks the UTS web-site is <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/hrsic/TVL.htm>. Other members prefer personal help, which is still available by emailing [MAILTO:HRSIC-UTSCST](mailto:MAILTO:HRSIC-UTSCST) or by phoning toll free 1-888-872-4885 (1-888-USCG-TVL). Travel pay disbursing status may be obtained from the Finance Center's toll free number, 1-800-564-5504 or on the Web at <http://www.fincen.uscg.mil/webdb-signon.asp>. Lastly, UTS procedures will be described in the next change to HRSICINST M1000.2A, the Personnel and Pay Procedures Manual (3PM).

Regards, FL Ames



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**Eligible uniformed services retirees and their families may enroll in the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan (USFHP), a TRICARE Prime Designated Provider, at any time during the year.** Previously, retired military beneficiaries were only allowed to enroll in the popular military health plan during a one-month enrollment period each year. Family members of active duty military have always been able to enroll in USFHP at any time.

The USFHP is a Department of Defense-sponsored health plan available to families of active duty military, retirees and their eligible family members, including those age 65 and over. The plan provides TRICARE Prime health care through networks of community-based civilian hospitals and physicians in seven areas of the country:

### **\* JOHNS HOPKINS COMMUNITY PHYSICIANS**

Serving central Maryland and parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia

### **\* MARTIN'S POINT HEALTH CARE**

Serving Maine and southern New Hampshire

\* BRIGHTON MARINE HEALTH CENTER

Serving eastern Massachusetts, including Cape Cod, and Rhode Island

\* SAINT VINCENT CATHOLIC MEDICAL CENTERS OF NEW YORK

Serving parts of New York, all of New Jersey and southern Connecticut

\* FAIRVIEW HOSPITAL/CLEVELAND CLINIC HEALTH SYSTEM

Serving northeast Ohio

\* CHRISTUS HEALTH

Serving southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana

\* PACMED CLINICS

Serving the Puget Sound area of Washington State

According to a 2001 USFHP member survey conducted by Market Street Research, the USFHP consistently maintains a patient satisfaction rating that is significantly higher than the national average for commercial managed care plans. In fact, 82 percent of USFHP members rated overall satisfaction with the plan at 8 or higher on a 10-point scale, compared to 57 percent for HMOs.

For more information about the DoD-sponsored USFHP health care program, call 1-888-25-USFHP or visit the USFHP Web site at <http://www.usfhp.org>.